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School Paper: Q&A

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Q: How -- how is it you can manage to spend time here at Principia College, particularly at this point when the world's history and affairs are moving along at a rate?

DIRECTOR TURNER: Well as I indicated to you, I try to get out into the public every once in a while to keep the public better informed. And I made a commitment to go to Minneapolis to talk with a group of businessmen. And they wanted ninety days' notice, which was just about when all these things broke. And I go to Minneapolis tomorrow. And so I said, well, I've got a long-standing promise to David Andrews; Principia is almost on the way to Minneapolis, so I tried to merge them. What I do is I go to some area in the country or some city, and I try to do two or three things. And, you know, there've been some changes in schedule to do some personal things, but normally I would have left the office at 3:00 this afternoon and I'd be back Thursday morning, mid morning.

So, yeah, I try to get a lot of things into a day and a half, or two nights and a day.

Q: You were -- I was really interested in your -- your emphasizing of the economic powers that we have as a country. And I was wondering if you feel that the military force remains a viable deterrent, or will the ultimate influence remain economic? And if so, why is the grain embargo seen as useless by so many?

DIRECTOR TURNER: Well, I don't want to downplay

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the military deterrent. I think it's utterly critical. If you don't have the ability to force the ante up so the Soviets won't take military advantage of you, you haven't got anything, because the one place they compete with us successfully is in the military sphere. They can't compete with us economically. They really can't compete with us politically.

So that's sort of a sine qua non from which you start.

Now, you don't want to wage military warfare, particularly between the two superpowers. So we have waged propaganda warfare in the past, during the Cold War period. They've done things like blockades of Berlin, and so on, bordering on the military. I think we're in a somewhat different phase now where tensions are greater. And we are resorting to these economic measures. The grain embargo is not ineffective. They wanted some 17 million tons more than we're going to sell them. And it's not easy to find that much on the international market to repair the imbalance.

Over a long period of time, a longer [period], you know, several years, if our friends and allies don't cooperate, they probably could replace what they need. And they won't always need 17 million. They had a very bad crop this year. On the other hand, as the Canadians are doing and the Australians are doing -- they've been very cooperative in this regard -- it could really hurt them over time.

If the embargo is successful for a couple of more years, they're going to have to slaughter enough cattle that their meat consumption in the Soviet Union will just be shot to heck. You know, they're already going to be put back by the present embargo just by the United States to where they were in the early 1970s in terms of per capita meat consumption for this year. So it will have -- you know, it isn't going to drive them up the wall in terms of capitulating all over the place. They've tightened their belts before a heck of a lot tighter than they will on this, of course. But it isn't going to be pleasant, and there will be pressure.

Q: With the crescendo of tensions that we're reading about nowadays, right now in fact, what do you sense is the breaking point of, like, the Soviet Union, and where do you think we'll draw the line on the kind of military preparations that are going on?

DIRECTOR TURNER: Well, the President said the Persian Gulf is a vital area for the United States. And I think we will draw a line. I think he drew a line and said, you know, we can't allow an unfriendly power to take control of that area of the world. So much of the European, Japanese,

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as well as American economic well-being is dependent upon it.

What will be a critical factor for the Soviets? I don't see them being in any difficulty economically or militarily that'll be so great that they'll snap or do something totally irrational. I don't think they're under that great a pressure from what I emphasized their economic problems, and so on.

But that will mean belt-tightening, and so on. But I don't see it as something that's going to, you know, force real major changes in their outlook on the world or their internal problems.

Q: In your talk, you said that you would try to plan ahead. What areas in the Middle East right now do you see as the hottest spots? South Yemen or....?

DIRECTOR TURNER: Well, in the immediate short term, it's North Yemen....

Q: North Yemen.

DIRECTOR TURNER: ...South Yemen's ability or desire to take over North Yemen and thereby menace Saudi Arabia from two directions; South Yemen being to the south of Saudi Arabia; North Yemen being to the west. And I think the Saudis would look on that as a very dangerous thing.

At the same time, you've got to look at the long-term trends in the area. Iraq is working itself away from the Soviet Union, to some extent. Syria, on the other hand, is becoming more friendly with the Soviet Union. Syria and Iraq six months ago were trying to have a union. Today they're beginning to be at each other's throat. The Saudis had an unfortunate incident in Mecca in December. What does that portend for the area? How are they going to grapple with this problem of internal disorder? How they do it over the years ahead -- it's not sort of an imminent thing -- is going to be very critical to all of us. So we've got a lot of problems to watch. And overriding them all, of course, is what happens to the Arabs and Israel after we get a resolution of the Palestinian problem. I mean the Arab countries in the region look on that as the touchstone of relations with the United States. And they don't want to deal with the United States as long as they view us, whether it's true or not, as being the protectors of Israel. So if we can get a resolution and they can agree to live, Palestinian and Israeli, side by side, it will remove one of the major irritants of United States' policy in the area.

Q: I have one question. Did you want to ask one?

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Q: Yeah. I have one question, and that is that I know that probably -- in Iran, they probably view the difficulties they lived under with the Shah as not being very much different than what the Jews suffered under Hitler. And I just wonder, wouldn't they take our, you know, letting the Shah come into our country and living, you know, and having medical attention and then going to a Texas Air Force base as kind of -- well, it's almost like granting asylum to a war criminal.

What do you think of that parallel?

DIRECTOR TURNER: I think it's over-stretched to compare Hitler and the Shah.

Q: Then the atrocities are blown out of proportion as far as....?

DIRECTOR TURNER: From what I know of the German atrocities to the Jews in World War II, there's nothing like it in Iran; I mean, you know, collecting up millions of people and putting them in gas chambers. I don't believe -- I'm not just trying to apologize for the Shah, who I think tried to do a lot of good for his country in addition, you know. But it was not a democratic, open society like we would have preferred. But for goodness sakes, I don't think there was anything at all approaching the scale of atrocities in Nazi Germany.

Q: So the level of atrocities is not on a criminal level?

DIRECTOR TURNER: I would go further than that. I would say not only the level was sharply different from Nazi Germany, but the quality. I mean, you know, mass exterminations in specially constructed gas chambers, to my knowledge, did not take place in Iran.

Now whether there's a criminal case against the Shah is another thing. But you put it in very stark contrast when you put it with Hitler.

Q: We don't know whether there is or isn't any....

DIRECTOR TURNER: Any what?

Q: We don't know whether there is or is not a case against the Shah....

DIRECTOR TURNER: Criminal.

Q: ...I wouldn't comment on that if I were you.

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Q: What was your reaction to the recent reporting in the Monitor about the atrocity over there, a thousand soldiers being gunned down in -- excuse me -- in Afghanistan? What was your reaction?

DIRECTOR TURNER: Well, I think it's quite -- it's quite conceivable that it happened. We can't confirm it. I think an important point is that if we have evidence of that kind of thing, we should be sure that the international public is aware of it. As I said in my talk, keeping the world aware of what is going on and how bad it is in Afghanistan is very important to keeping the pressure on the Soviets not to stay longer than they absolutely have to.

Q: Better get you to bed before you fall down.

DIRECTOR TURNER: Thank you.

[End of Q&A Session, School Paper, Principia College.]